

Article appeared
on page A-16

Approved For Release 2005/01/12 : CIA-RDP88-01315R000400390152-1

C 645.03.2

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Letters to the editor

Missile test data

While I was pleased to see coverage of the American Security Council's panel on SALT verification, Vernon Guidry's article (Jan. 5) missed the essence of the controversy over Soviet concealment of missile test data.

The Soviet practice of transmitting such data by means of a secret code from an inflight missile to a ground station makes it virtually impossible for U.S. intelligence services to learn whether the missile being tested is MIRVed. Being able to determine if a missile is MIRVed will be critical to verifying SALT II.

At Geneva, the Soviets proposed to stop coding such missile test data if the data are important to SALT. But the Soviets would decide what data are important to SALT, and all "unimportant" data they could continue to encode.

In other words, we would trust the Russians not to conceal data that proved they were violating SALT.

Of course, such a proposal did little to satisfy SALT critics.

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